

Appl. No. : 09/965,908
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A1
In the event a player is a bonus event winner, bonus award information is transmitted to the player via the player tracking device. The bonus is awarded based on criteria independent of the outcome of a game played by the player at the gaming machine. The system and method provide for the award of bonuses independent of the configuration of the games the gaming machine presents, player wagers or game outcome.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 1-19.

Please add the following new claims:

A2
120. A method of providing a bonus to a player of a gaming machine comprising:
accepting a wager establishing entitlement of said player to play a game presented at said gaming machine;
funding a bonus award independent of said wager accepted from said player;
accepting player identification information at said gaming machine;
configuring bonus event information regarding a bonus award;
determining if said player is entitled to participate in said bonus event using at least said player identification information;
if said player is entitled to participate in said bonus event, determining if said player is a winner of said bonus event based upon one or more criteria for winning said bonus event; and
if said player is the winner of said bonus event, awarding said bonus award.

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²
~~21.~~ The method in accordance with Claim ~~20~~¹ including the step of transmitting said bonus event information to said player at said gaming machine.

³
~~22.~~ The method in accordance with Claim ~~21~~² wherein said bonus event information is transmitted for presentation by a player tracking device associated with said gaming machine.

⁴
~~23.~~ The method in accordance with Claim ~~20~~¹ wherein said one or more criteria for winning said bonus event are independent of the outcome of the game played by said player.

⁵
~~24.~~ The method in accordance with Claim ~~20~~¹ including the step of funding said bonus from a general revenue fund.

⁶
~~25.~~ A gaming system comprising:

- a plurality of gaming machines configured to present at least one game upon a wager by a player;
- a player tracking device associated with each gaming machine, said player tracking devices including a card reader, keypad and at least one display, each player tracking device configured to receive information regarding the gaming machine with which it is associated;
- a player tracking host arranged to store data regarding activities of players of said gaming devices;

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a communications network linking said player tracking devices with said player tracking host over which information is transmitted; and

a bonus system host, said bonus system host configured to generate bonus information regarding a bonus award funded independently of wagers placed with said gaming machines and to transmit bonus award information to said player tracking devices of said gaming machines via said communications network.

26. The gaming system in accordance with Claim ⁷~~25~~ wherein said bonus system host is configured to determine whether an eligible player of one of said gaming machines has won a bonus award.

27. The gaming system in accordance with Claim ⁸~~25~~ wherein said bonus system host is configured to determine the eligibility of a player to win a bonus award.

28. The gaming system in accordance with Claim ⁹~~25~~ wherein said bonus system host is configured to transmit bonus event information to said player tracking devices of said gaming machines for presentation to players of said gaming machines.

29. The gaming system in accordance with Claim ¹⁰~~25~~ wherein said bonus award comprises credits.